



ASSOCIATION CATHOLIQUE
CANADIENNE DE LA SANTÉ

CATHOLIC HEALTH
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COMMUNIQUE

CATHOLIC HEALTH EVOLVING

Ottawa — The Catholic response to health problems has traditionally been found in the reassuring presence of Catholic healthcare facilities. Current downsizing in the healthcare system, however, is challenging this single definition to the healing ministry.

In the December 1996 edition of the *Catholic Healthcare Reform Update*, the Catholic Health Association of Canada (CHAC) reports that most provincial governments continue to restructure their healthcare system, looking for ways to trim their budget. In some cases, downsizing as well as outright closure of denominational facilities threaten ownership and governance.

In Ontario, the Health Services Restructuring Commission proposed this fall the closure of two of Sudbury's three hospitals. The Sudbury General, the city's only Catholic institution, is one of them. This recommendation not only ignored the local solution which had been approved by the Minister of Health; it also disregarded a statement by the Premier in 1995 reaffirming his commitment to Catholic hospitals. "The Commission's report in Sudbury has profound implications for denominational healthcare across the province because in this instance, it effectively eliminates the Catholic church from healthcare in Sudbury," reports the Catholic Health Association of Ontario.

The Catholic Health Association of Manitoba successfully spearheaded, with the Interfaith Healthcare Association of Winnipeg, a campaign to obtain amendments to Bill 49. The Bill would have granted the Minister of Health extraordinary powers superseding other legislation which had previously protected denominational facilities. The amendments secured allow "the Minister to enter into agreements with the operators of facilities to preserve the facilities' ownership, autonomy, governance and mission, permitting agreements with respect to the faith and religious values of facilities."

Many provincial Catholic health associations are seeking new strategies and finding new ways to ensure their mission and values are nourished. The Catholic Health Association of British Columbia sent a copy of the *Health Care Ethics Guide and Spirituality and Health* — two publications from the CHAC — to every parish in the province and in the Yukon. An accompanying letter explained the Association's desire to inform and educate as many Catholics as possible about health and healing.

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In Alberta, the Caritas Health Group and the Edmonton General Hospital are setting up a wellness centre. The Catholic Health Association of Alberta and Affiliates also reports that a number of voluntary facilities are working with their respective regional health authority to establish programs that will serve the whole region.

In Quebec, while “institutions are losing the independence they enjoyed prior to reform (...) the challenge remains to find new ways to continue an abiding respect for the human person,” the *Catholic Healthcare Reform Update* states.

One Catholic hospital in New Brunswick has been asked to guide the development of a mission-effectiveness program for an entire region. “Recognition has been given to the Catholic hospital for its work in mission effectiveness,” says the New Brunswick Catholic Health Association.

In Saskatchewan, the Catholic Health Association has produced a *Parish-Home Ministry of Care* manual which it makes available to parishes in order to broaden the understanding of how Catholics care for the sick.

THERAPEIA — which encompasses Catholic healthcare in Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia — also focused on healthcare in the parish setting and is now taking steps to establish a program modelled on the *Parish-Home Ministry of Care*.

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The Catholic Health Association of Canada (CHAC) is a national Christian association supportive of healthcare in the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church. Its members include eight provincial/regional associations; 127 hospitals and homes; 106 associates comprised of religious orders, dioceses, physicians, etc.; 34 owner members of healthcare institutions; eight corporate members; and 276 individual members. The CHAC, the national voice for Catholic healthcare, strives to have a concern for health in all its aspects: physical, emotional, spiritual and social.

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December 23, 1996
(10-96)